

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 218944

E.O.11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NO US OVIP, BR

SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF DOM HELDER CAMARA

REF: OSLO 4035

1. DOM HELDER PESSOA CAMARA IS THE ARCHBISHOP OF THE BRAZILIAN CITIES OF RECIFE AND OLINDA AND THE MOST OUT-SPOKEN AND WELL-KNOWN LEADER OF THE MORE PROGRESSIVE WING OF THE BRAZILIAN ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. HE IS A CHAMPION OF THE POOR AND THE OPPRESSED, ESPECIALLY IN THE IMPOVERISHED BRAZILIAN NORTHEAST. DOM HELDER IS A VIGOROUS RE-FORMER WHO SEES THE CHURCH AS A LEGITIMATE AGENT FOR RADICAL AND NON-VIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE. HIS POLITICAL VIEWS ARE PERHAPS BEST DESCRIBED AS SOCIALIST BUT NOT COMMUNIST.

2. THE ARCHBISHOP IS CERTAINLY THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL CLERIC IN BRAZIL. SUPPORTERS REFER TO HIM AS "THE CONSCIENCE OF BRAZIL" AND "PATRON OF THE POOR". DETRACTORS CALL HIM DEMAGOGUE, EGOTIST, SELF-SERVING PUBLIC RELATIONS MAN

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AND COMMUNIST. DOM HELDER HAS GREAT PERSONAL APPEAL AND
USES IT EFFECTIVELY. HE IS GREATLY SOUGHT AFTER BY
LIBERAL CATHOLICS TO LECTURE THROUGHOUT THE UNITED

STATES AND EUROPE. IN RECENT YEARS HE HAS OFTEN BEEN
MENTIONED AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE. AT
TIMES HE HAS EVEN APPEARED TO BE SEEKING IT.

3. A COMPLETE BIO OF DOM HELDER DATED NOVEMBER 6.

4. DOM HELDER IS ANATHEMA TO THE PRESENT BRAZILIAN
GOVERNMENT. IT PERCEIVES HIS ACTIVITIES AS SUBVERSIVE
AND PROHIBITS THE PRESS FROM MENTIONING HIM. THE REGIME
DOES NOT TAKE MORE VIGOROUS ACTION AGAINST HIM CHIEFLY
BECAUSE IT DOES NOT WANT TO MAKE HIM A MARTYR. THE NOTION
THAT HE MIGHT EVEN BE CONSIDERED FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
INFURIATES THE GOB.

5. THE DEPARTMENT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE EMBASSY WANTS AN
EVALUATION OF DOM HELDER SO IT CAN BETTER ANALYZE THE
CAMPAIGN BY GROUPS IN NORWAY TO AWARD A PEOPLES PEACE
PRIZE TO HIM ON DECEMBER 10 WHEN THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE IS
TO BE AWARDED TO DR. KISSINGER. GIVEN THE GOB'S VERY
STRONG FEELINGS ABOUT THE ARCHBISHOP, HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY
SHOULD EXERCISE CAUTION IN ANY PUBLIC DISCUSSION IT MIGHT
HAVE NOT TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE USG HAS AN
OFFICIAL VIEW CONCERNING HIM OR THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE
MIGHT BE AWARDED A PRIZE.

6. ANY ADDITIONAL MESSAGES ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH ARE
ADDRESSED TO POSTS IN BRAZIL SHOULD BE CLASSIFIED. RUSH

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, HONOR AWARDS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE218944
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: BR:A.WATSON:LK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731164/aaaakafp.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: OSLO 4035
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19-Sep-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <03-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 980313
Subject: EVALUATION OF DOM HELDER CAMARA
TAGS: OVIP, PFOR, BR, NO, US, (CAMARA, DON)
To: OSLO INFO BRASILIA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005